

December 12, 1950

The President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned group, designated by the Council on Foreign Relations to study our country's political, economic responsibilities in Europe, have reached certain conclusions regarding decisions and actions now necessary. We are led to lay them before you by the conviction that our country and other countries still free are in critical danger; that if our potential enemies choose to attack us in our present posture we face disastrous consequences; and that this situation can be redeemed only by immediate unified exertion and sacrifice.

We respectfully submit to you the following as our analysis of the country's danger and of what must be done to overcome it now. Today we run the risk of global war. The initiation of the steps we propose would not increase it, and their completion would markedly diminish it.

a. A free world, disunited, is certain to fall piecemeal under the tyrannical power of Soviet imperialism.

b. The nations comprising the North Atlantic Treaty Organization today command such totally inadequate military forces that it is fair to assume that only our present superiority of atomic weapons and a Soviet economic and political unreadiness to risk the consequences of a war of attrition against the United States have maintained an uneasy peace in Europe.

c. The only way in which we and our friends can make the Soviets respect our peaceful intent and moral purposes will be by rapidly producing powerful military forces. This effort should be limited only by the productive capacity of a free economy. The price is sacrifice by all in the whole free world, including definite recessions in our standard of living through payment of taxes, longer work hours, and military service as an obligation of citizenship. No war premiums should go either to capital or labor.

d. We warn especially against dependence upon paper agreements that do not reflect the determined will of cooperating peoples, speedily implemented by rapid creation of forces.

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e. The United States must not, under any circumstances, accept national responsibility for military command in Europe except as a consequence of the mutual confidence engendered by a concrete program for the mobilization of forces in North America and in West European countries, backed by government pledges of prompt execution. With this must go a satisfactory understanding among the North Atlantic Pact countries, and with the authorities of West Germany, for the use of the West German military potential in the common defense of Western Europe.

f. Our own national efforts can attain maximum effectiveness only if we:

(1) Recognize that we are in a state of national emergency.

(2) Tell the people the bleak facts. They will respond.

(3) Expedite with all possible urgency the placing of orders for our military requirements, and for those of other nations willing to fight with us, emphasizing speed and efficiency and minimum costs. Cut non-essential spending to the bone.

(4) Produce military forces at maximum speed and minimum cost under a system of universal military service, and build up reserve forces as well as adequate strength in being.

(5) Station in Europe, as soon as possible, a strong United States ground force, step-by-step with the development in the several countries of Western Europe of agreed upon comparable forces. There should be special concern for the strength of the United States ground forces during the early critical years.

(6) Provide at once, with our allies, adequate air support and naval forces capable of controlling sea lanes wherever our interests are involved. Strategic air strength should be equal to the demands of an effective bombing attack in the event of war.

(7) Do all things that will produce the strength necessary to carry us through the tensions of an indefinite future, without war if possible, but prepared to wage it effectively if it is thrust upon us. Do this with full determination that whatever individual liberties we sacrifice to produce and maintain necessary forces will be restored when the imminent danger of foreign aggression subsides.

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Believe us to be, with much respect,

Sincerely yours,

Hamilton Fish Armstrong

Percy W. Bidwell

William Diebold, Jr.

Allen W. Dulles

Edward Mead Earle

George S. Franklin, Jr.

Walter H. Mallory

Stacy May

Arthur S. Nevins

Philip D. Reed

Lindsay Rogers

Henry M. Wriston